

STATEMENT UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(c)

At the time the invention of the subject application was made, that invention and the patent no. 6,439,996 to LeMay et al., (or the application therefore) were owned by, or subject to an obligation of assignment to, the same person.

REMARKS

Attached hereto are sheets entitled "Version of Specification Marked to Show Changes Made", setting forth the amended Abstract with editorial markings.

The Abstract has been amended to comply with the word number limit, as required by the examiner.

Enclosed herewith is a Letter to the Drawing Review Branch, submitting a new sheet of drawing including Fig. 6 to correct the informality noted by the draftsperson. Approval of this corrected drawing is respectively asked.

Attached hereto are sheets entitled "Version of Claims Marked To Show Changes Made", setting forth the amended claims with editorial markings.

Claims 1-36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over U.S. patent no. 6,439,996 to LeMay et al., either alone or in combination with one or more of U.S. patent nos. 4,072,930 to Lucero et al. and 5,923,249 to Muir. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

First, the principal reference, LeMay et al., is unavailable as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §103(c), as set forth in the foregoing "Statement Under 35 U.S.C. §103(c)."

Furthermore, even if LeMay et al. were available as a reference, it does not, either alone or in combination with the other references, disclose or suggest the claimed invention.

A significant aspect of the invention, as set forth in claims 1, 11 and 32, is the selective control of access to one or more of plural areas of one or more gaming machines, each of which areas has an electrically operable lock mechanism associated therewith, by the input at the

machine of personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to the machine or area thereof and responding to that input for operating one or more lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to the identified person. The invention relates specifically to physical areas of gaming machines and to lock mechanisms which are physically movable between locked and unlocked conditions. In order to clarify this point, each of the claims 1, 11 and 32 has been amended to specify an apparatus or method for controlling access to one or more "physical" areas of a gaming machine which has plural electrically operated lock mechanisms which are "physically" movable between locked and unlocked conditions.

LeMay et al. is the only one of the cited references which relates to control of access to an area of a gaming machine. LeMay et al. discloses only one electrically operated lock mechanism, viz., lock 38a, and there is no suggestion in LeMay et al. that the operation of that lock is in any way responsive to the input of personnel identification data. Apparently recognizing this fact, the examiner contends that the other locked "areas" of the LeMay et al. device are access-controlled or restricted areas of the machine's electronic memory, access to which is controlled by an electronic key 10. LeMay et al. contain no disclosure of "plural electronically operable lock mechanisms" which are "physically" movable between locked and unlocked conditions for controlling access to "physical" areas of the machine. Accordingly, it is submitted that each of independent claims 1, 11 and 32 and the claims dependent thereon patentably distinguish from the cited art.

Another aspect of the invention, as set forth in claim 17, is monitoring the condition of lockable doors of the gaming machine by providing a first transducer apparatus to monitor the condition of the door itself and a second transducer apparatus for monitoring the condition of a

lock bolt on the door. No such arrangement is disclosed or suggested by the cited art. Muir is the only reference which deals with monitoring of the conditions of parts of gaming machines. The examiner contends that Muir includes transducers associated "with the lock and door" for generating output signals indicative of the condition of "the lock and door", citing column 3, lines 8-67 and column 4, lines 1-50. However, neither those portions nor any other portion of Muir contains any suggestion of monitoring the condition of a lock on a door. Muir does teach monitoring of the conditions of one or more doors on a gaming machine, but there is simply no suggestion of independently monitoring the condition of a lock mechanism associated with the door. As is set forth in applicants' disclosure, independent monitoring of both door and lock affords important advantages which are completely absent from the cited art. Accordingly, claim 17 and the claims dependent thereon are believed to be patentable over the art of record.

Another aspect of the invention, as set forth in claim 27, is the provision of an electronically operable lock mechanism for controlling enablement of a key-operated latch assembly. In order to clarify the intent of this claim, it has been amended to specify that the latch assembly is movable by a "mechanical" key between its latching and unlatching conditions. This distinguishes from the electronic key 10 of LeMay which controls access to electronic data storage devices. While LeMay discloses key-operated latches, such as the locks 36 or 38, it contains no suggestion whatsoever of controlling the enablement of those key-operated devices by the use of an electronically operable lock mechanism. More specifically, it contains no suggestion of a lock mechanism which is operable in a first condition wherein it "prevents movement of the actuator member [of the latch assembly] from its latching condition" and a second condition wherein it "permits movement of the actuator member" between its latching and unlatching conditions. The LeMay locks are either key-operated or they are electronically

operated. There is no suggestion in LeMay or the use of an electronically operated lock to control enablement of a key-operated latch mechanism. Accordingly, claim 27 and the claims dependent thereon are believed to be patentable over the cited art.

In view of the foregoing, each of the remaining claims 1-36 is now believed to be in condition for allowance and, accordingly, allowance of the application is respectfully asked.

Respectfully submitted,

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By

A handwritten signature in cursive ink, appearing to read "Jerry Stratman". The signature is written over a horizontal line and is somewhat stylized.

Version of Specification Marked to Show Changes Made

An apparatus and method affords, to authorized persons, access to one or more lockable areas of one or more gaming machines. Each area includes a door or switch and an associated electrically operable lock mechanism which controls access to the area [either directly, or indirectly by controlling enablement of an associated manual key-operated latch assembly]. Each machine has a local processor communicating with a central host computer and with lock processors for each of its lockable areas. Personnel identification and access authorization data is stored at the host computer. [Part of the data] Data may also be stored on personal data cards, respectively assigned to individual persons. A person seeking access inputs identification data at the machine, [using a card reader or other data input device,] and the host computer responds with signals to unlock lock mechanisms for areas which the identified person is authorized to access. Each machine monitors[, and sends to the host,] the states of all of its locks and doors. A manual override key, [which can be] disabled when power is on, [can operate] operates the lock mechanisms when power is off[, and the apparatus provides an indication that the override key has been used].

Version of Claims Marked to Show Changes Made

1. (Amended) Apparatus for selectively controlling access to one or more of plural physical areas of a gaming machine, the apparatus comprising:

plural electrically operable lock mechanisms respectively associated with the areas and each physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area;

control circuitry including a processor operating under control of a stored program and coupled to each of the lock mechanisms for controlling operation thereof;

a data storage and retrieval system adapted to communicate with the processor and including a storage medium for storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the areas, if any, of the machine for which a person seeking access to the machine is authorized; and

a data input device coupled to the processor for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to an area of the machine,

the processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for operating one or more lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person.

11. (Amended) Apparatus for selectively controlling access to one or more physical areas of each of a plurality of gaming machines, the apparatus comprising:

plural electrically operable lock mechanisms respectively associated with the areas of the machines and each physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area,

each machine having a local processor coupled to each of its lock mechanisms and a local data storage and retrieval device coupled to the local processor for storing a program for controlling the local processor,

a host computer in data communication with each of the local processors,

a host data storage and retrieval device storing a host program for controlling the host computer and a database including data relating to the identifications of all authorized personnel and the area or areas of each machine for which each person is authorized access,

input/output apparatus coupled to the host computer, and

local data input devices respectively coupled to the local processors for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to the associated machine,

each local processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for communicating it to the host computer for comparison with the database and being responsive to signals from the host computer for operating one or more of its lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person.

27. (Amended) In a gaming machine having a mechanical key-operated latch assembly including an actuator member movable by a mechanical key between latching and unlatching conditions, access control apparatus comprising:

an electrically operable lock mechanism movable between first and second conditions, and

control circuitry coupled to the lock mechanism for controlling operation thereof, the lock mechanism being disposed so that in its first condition, it prevents movement of the actuator member from its latching condition and in its second condition it permits movement of the actuator member between its latching and unlatching conditions.

32. (Amended) A method of selectively controlling access to one or more of plural physical areas of a gaming machine, the method comprising:

providing each area with an electrically operable lock mechanism physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to the area;

storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the areas, if any, of the machine for which a person seeking access to the machine is authorized;

inputting at the machine at least personnel identification information identifying a person seeking access to the machine at the time access is sought; and

electrically unlocking the lock mechanism of only those areas, if any, for which the person seeking access is authorized.